

his past year of exemplary dedication to duty and service as an Army congressional liaison for the Chief of Army Reserve. In that role, he managed the operations and readiness portfolio for the Army Reserve. I am grateful that he will continue to serve the Army and Congress in his new assignment as commander, 361st Civil Affairs Brigade, in Kaiserslautern, Germany. We wish him well in his new position.

A native of Ohio, Colonel Novak enlisted in the Army as a psychological operations specialist in the 21st Psychological Operations Company, Cleveland, OH. He graduated with honors from John Carroll University, magna cum laude, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps Program, distinguished military graduate, in 1991 and was commissioned into the infantry. Throughout his career, he also earned a master's degree in business and organizational security management from Webster University; a master's degree in legislative affairs from the George Washington University; a master's degree in strategic intelligence from the National Intelligence University, Defense Intelligence Agency; a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College; and associate of arts degrees in Russian studies and law enforcement.

As an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve, Colonel Novak served with military intelligence, logistics, psychological operations, and civil affairs units at the platoon, detachment, company, battalion, group, and major command level as an executive officer, platoon leader, detachment commander, psychological operations officer, Product Development Center chief, logistics officer, assistant operations officer, S3, company commander, plans officer, operations officer, aide-de-camp, assistant chief of staff, and battalion commander.

His service in the Army Reserve is highlighted by his selection in 2009 to serve as an Army congressional fellow. While assigned to the Office, Chief of the Army Reserve from 2010 to 2012, Colonel Novak spent a year representing the Army to the Congress by working in the office of Senator Saxby Chambliss. Following the completion of battalion command, he returned once again to the Office, Chief Army Reserve to serve as a legislative liaison officer.

As with all our citizen soldiers, it is important that we acknowledge his service in the civilian sector. Colonel Novak has extensive law enforcement experience, serving as both a municipal police officer in Ohio and as a Federal civilian special agent with the U.S. Air Force Office of Special Investigations. It is because of their cooperation and understanding during his many tours on Active Duty that he is able to make such a positive impact on the Army Reserve.

John is accustomed to working long hours in all of his positions in the Army and civilian sector, so it is only

fair and proper to acknowledge the tireless support of his wife Stacey and his children—Patrick John Novak and Caitlin Lynn Novak. I thank them for their sacrifices and wish them all the best for continued success in the future.

Throughout his 30-year career, COL John Novak has made positive impacts on the careers and lives of his soldiers, peers, and superiors; and I am grateful that he has chosen to serve as an Army leader. I join my colleagues today in honoring his dedication to our Nation and invaluable service to the U.S. Congress as an Army congressional liaison.●

TRIBUTE TO DAVID W. SCHEIBLE

● Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I wish to honor a great Georgian, David W. Scheible, chairman and CEO of Graphic Packaging International, Inc. David is retiring from Graphic Packaging after a decade of transforming the company.

Under David's leadership, Graphic Packaging has grown to become a Fortune 500 company with over 12,000 employees globally and a highly respected leader in the paper and packaging industry.

Last year, David was the recipient of the Executive Papermaker of the Year award, which is based on corporate vision, strategic objectives, and strong leadership within the individual's company and the paper industry.

David is also a pillar in our community with a passion for education, sustainability, and feeding the hungry. He serves on the board of directors of Benchmark Electronics, the board of Cancer Treatment Centers of America, and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, where he was chairman of the education committee for the last 5 years.

As the immediate past chairman of the American Forest & Paper Association, David was a powerful and visionary advocate working with Federal, State, and local officials on issues critical to the pulp and paper industry. David's charisma, focus, and quick intellect earned the respect of many legislators, including myself.

It is with great pleasure that I recognize David Scheible, a man who continues to make a difference, and I wish him well in his future endeavors.●

VERMONT ESSAY FINALISTS

● Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask to have printed in the RECORD copies of some of the finalist essays written by Vermont High School students as part of the sixth annual "What is the State of the Union" essay contest conducted by my office. These finalists were selected from nearly 800 entries.

The material follows:

ADAM FLEISCHMAN, SOUTH BURLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL (FINALIST)

The state of the union is strong. Americans are working hard, unemployment is down, the stock market is up, and the reces-

sion of 2008 feels like ancient history. Still, we face problems. Climate change is one of those issues, particularly because of the denial by politicians in our government that refuse to do anything, because their re-election campaigns rely on oil and gas companies' contributions.

In the 114th congress, 170 members deny that global warming is real. Many representatives receive huge donations, as much as \$63 million from big oil and gas companies, and in return, they support deregulation initiatives in Congress to protect the corporations. In other words, they prevent progress and obstruct a move away from non-renewable energy sources. In this way, they are not representing their constituents—they're representing the interests of the very wealthy corporations—and it's undermining the political system we have.

In a legislative body that is constantly blinded by the goal of staying in office, rather than passing comprehensive reforms to save our planet, the denial is rampant. Even though 97% of scientists agree that climate change is real, and manmade, these elected officials with no background in science choose to ignore it, and instead put trillions of taxpayer money into a defense budget that is bloated and unnecessary. For climate change to be properly addressed, it starts with Congress. If we invest money into clean energy—solar panels, wind turbines, natural gas—we will slowly be able to move away from non-renewable, dirty sources.

We also must take a stand against the corporations profiting off of non-renewable sources, making it clear that their campaign contributions should not be the difference between whether or not we leave a healthier planet for future generations. If we wait long enough, it will be too late to do anything. It's not part of a "liberal agenda" that some in Congress like to criticize. It's a common problem that is hurting our common home, and it's up to all of humankind to deal with it. That can't happen if the political charades are continued in Washington, D.C.

ELLERY HARKNESS, CHAMPLAIN VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL (FINALIST)

My fellow Americans, there are many important issues burdening our world today; in order to fix these problems, we need an education system that produces well educated leaders to solve these issues. Our education system as it stands today needs to be modified and socioeconomic factors hindering education need to be addressed.

Education should be an equalizer, so that anyone, no matter their circumstances, can realize their potential; this isn't the reality though. The truth is that kids from disadvantaged families have a far lower chance for success. Inequality due to wealth and race are huge problems; the disturbing school to prison pipeline is one outcome of this. Only 1 in 12 children in poverty will graduate from college today and almost half won't graduate from high school. Studies have also found that African American and Hispanic high school graduation rates are 10% lower than the U.S. average. Education can raise people out of poverty, while ignoring these problems only continues to perpetrate a horrific cycle of poverty and create more economic problems.

Consider that by 2020, 65% of U.S. jobs will require a postsecondary education, according to Georgetown Public Policy Institute. Yet only 1 of 4 students are ready for college in the 4 core subjects when graduating high school, according to U.S. news. Regrettably, the education system not only isn't preparing students for college, it also forces students to bear an unreasonable financial burden in order to go to college. With free or reduced tuition programs, college education would be more accessible.